

# NORTH COUNTY NEWS

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## **Can Indian Point be attacked by terrorists? asks EPA**

**By Abby Luby**

The Environmental Protection Agency wants to know just how vulnerable the Indian Point Nuclear Power Plants are to a terrorist attack. They want the information to be part of the decision in the license renewal process for the Buchanan based plants.

The EPA's comment is based on a court decision ruling against the NRC last year in the case San Luis Obispo Mothers for Peace v. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (June 2006) where the Ninth Circuit court decided that the NRC was wrong in not considering public and industrial projects as terrorist targets.

Entergy, owner of the plants, applied to renew their operating license for Units Nos. 2 and 3 to keep the reactors running until 2033 and 2035. Unit No. 1 is not operational and is not part of the license renewal application. Neil Sheehan, spokesman for the NRC said the plant's vulnerability to a terrorist attack is not looked at in the license renewal process. "We would steer away from that," he said. "Security issues aren't considered in the context of re-licensing since they are looked at on an ongoing basis."

The NRC focuses only on how Entergy will safely manage the infrastructure of an aging power plant when reviewing the renewal application.

Phillip Musegaas of Riverkeeper, a long time critic of the plant's radioactive leaks into the Hudson River, said he was pleased that the EPA added their comments for review by the NRC.

"The EPA has recognized the critical need for the NRC to conduct a comprehensive environmental review of Indian Point's future impacts," he said. "That review includes the potential impacts from a terrorist attack."

Musegaas added that pressure is now on the NRC. "They need to wake up to the realities of a post 9/11 world and take a hard look at the environmental risks involved in continuing to operate Indian Point past its current license term."

Congressman John Hall said the EPA's letter reflected the voices of Indian Point's neighbors. "The EPA has decided to support the inclusion of important factors like radioactive leaks, spent fuel storage, and terrorist threats in the environmental review," said Hall. "I urge the NRC to follow the EPA's lead and investigate these issues during re-licensing."

Jim Steets of Entergy said that the NRC's ongoing oversight process looks at

all the issues raised by the EPA. "From Entergy's perspective, these issues the EPA has raised have either been fully addressed or will need to be addressed before the licenses are renewed," he said. "It's ultimately up to the NRC whether they [EPA comments] are included in the re-licensing process."

Marilyn Elie of the Indian Point Safe Energy Coalition (IPSEC) an organization of over 70 grassroots groups wanting to shutter the plant, sees the EPA's comments as a departure from the NRC's agenda.

"This is a surprising development on the part of the EPA," she said. "These real world issues like terrorism and a regional energy needs were not going to be considered by the NRC. Now, hopefully they will be."

Sheehan admits that the EPA has usually deferred to the NRC for plant safety issues and look to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for controlling discharges going into the Hudson River.

"The EPA may not have been as out in front on some of the issues as some other agencies because they respect that our jurisdiction and that of the DEC," he said.

In an emailed response to The North County News, Elias Rodriguez of the EPA wrote that they had previously submitted comments to a license renewal application for the Fitzpatrick nuclear plant in Oswego, NY. Rodriguez didn't address why the EPA is now commenting on the radioactive leaks nor if the EPA would be further involved with the license renewal process.

The EPA did however endorse Entergy's plan to stop one of the leaks whose source is the spent fuel pool in Unit No. 1. Entergy plans on removing the fuel assemblies housed in the pool to onsite dry storage casks. Water from the pool will be treated and discharged it into the Hudson River. The work should be completed by the end of 2008, according to Steets.